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Headline news for busy  
church editors

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Here is the Good News of the United Church of Christ, especially edited for congregational publications, with topical news of the wider church, helpful hints to strengthen members' faith and pride in the denomination and personal testimonies to stir the spirit. Each story is short and complete and can stand alone, ready to drop into the weekly bulletin or the monthly newsletter. The code at the end of some entries refers interested readers to a more comprehensive story in *United Church News*.

**IN A DIFFERENT VOICE** The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12) is a familiar ethical principle in many cultures, we learn from *The Bulletin of Scarsdale* (N.Y.) Congregational UCC.

- Do not unto others what you would not have them do to you.  
— *Confucianism*
- Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.  
— *Hinduism*
- No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.  
— *Islam*
- What is hateful to you, do not to your fellowmen. That is the entire law; all the rest is commentary.  
— *Judaism*
- Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss.  
— *Taoism*

Imagine what the world would be like if everyone in these faiths followed this simple rule.

**ARE YOU DEEPLY RELIGIOUS?** – Are UCC members any more or less religious than others? Judge for yourself. Here are the criteria pollster-George Gallup says make for the highest commitment.

- **Gender** – Women generally attach a greater sense of importance to religion than men.
- **Age** – Interest in religion starts to peak in those over 65.
- **Education** – Those with less education wish their faith were stronger.
- **Race** – Blacks show much higher levels of religious interest than whites.
- **Denomination** – Protestants more often proclaim the importance of their faith than do Catholics.
- **Politics** – There is no significant difference between Republicans and Democrats, but those on the far right and far left most often proclaim that religion is the most important factor in their lives.

**'THE STING' COMES TO THE UCC** – It was right out of a grade B Hollywood thriller: hidden microphones in brief cases, telephone taps, undercover cops, bribes, fast talking con artists. Only this attempted financial scam was all true, and it unfolded at the normally staid offices of the UCC Pension Boards in New York City.

When a couple of California "investors" tried to peddle a letter of credit to the Pension Boards that would return \$25 million on a \$22 million investment, George Doty, PB's chief investment officer, smelled a rat.

"If a deal is too good to be true, it probably is," he reasoned. He also knew that such letters of credit are not sold by banks and do not mature or increase in value. The PB referred the matter to their bankers, who called the police, who said they could nab the scam artists if the church agency was willing to go along.

An undercover police detective posed as a banker and was immediately offered a \$3,000 bribe, along with a second \$3,000 and a final payoff of \$15,000 when documents changed hands. The incriminating offer was picked up by a microphone hidden in a brief case on George Doty's desk. The police were also listening in on the telephone. When the deal appeared to be done, one of the two scam artists left the room to pay off the undercover agent. The police rushed out of an adjacent office and arrested the scam artist. The PB got a letter of thanks from the local district attorney. No Pension Board money was ever at risk.

**MAY I QUOTE YOU?** – "The primary question is not 'What must we do to be saved?' but 'What must we do to save God's creation?'"

— William Sloan Coffin, as quoted  
in the Rhode Island Conference News

## AS A TOKEN OF FORGIVENESS –

In this 50th anniversary year of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Mt. Hollywood (Calif.) UCC has a poignant reminder. On the altar in the sanctuary is a 25-inch cross made from camphor wood charred by the blast. It was given by the people of Hiroshima as a “token of forgiveness” and in remembrance that “God loves all people and that we in turn must learn to love our neighbors as ourselves.” Carved into the base is Ephesians 2:14, “He is our peace.”

The connection comes from Japanese Americans who were in Hiroshima at the time of the bombing, but who knew that Mt. Hollywood UCC had looked after the property of Japanese Americans interred, including that of Judge Lance Ito's parents and a number of Japanese Americans forced into internment camps during the war.

## DON'T ABANDON AFFIRMATIVE

**ACTION** – That's the message UCC President the Rev. Paul H. Sherry conveyed in a letter to members of Congress.

“Affirmative action is good for the United States,” Sherry writes. “It opens doors to jobs and education for those who might not otherwise get them.” The issue is moral as well as political. “It's an essential legal means for guaranteeing inalienable constitutional rights for people of color, women and people with disabilities.” Sherry said he was writing on behalf of General Synod which had urged a churchwide recommitment to affirmative action policies in light of recent Supreme Court decisions.

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**TEN MEASURES OF GOOD GOVERNMENT** – As a basis for resisting assault on social welfare programs, OCIS offers the following 10 guidelines for measuring government-proposed legislation at local, state and federal levels. Instead of government bashing, write to OCIS for the complete resolution. Use it as a monitoring tool and share it with your own lawmakers.

1. Legislation which preserves and improves the common good.
2. Legislation made effective through the timely establishment and implementation of appropriate regulations and guidelines.
3. Enforcement of legislation evenhanded and fair to all.
4. Legislation based on best available information.
5. Legislation written and enforced with full public participation.
6. Penalties commensurate to the level of damage done to common good and individuals most affected.
7. Private property and economic activities not lightly to be abridged by government.
8. Property rights are not absolute.
9. Compensation for property taken by government but usually no compensation for laws protecting common good and environment.
10. Regulation and enforcement reviewed and reformed on a regular basis.

**IN THE NAME OF** – What should gender-conscious churches do about the words in the sacrament of baptism, “In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Nothing, concluded most participants at the UCC's 12th Craigville Theological Colloquy. Critics say alternative words like “Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer” seem to imply that baptism is administered in the name of three theological functions rather than three persons, which make it an abstraction, not a relationship. Theologian Gabriel Fackre suggests expanding the formula with words that “deconstruct” the ideology that God is male, citing as an example the formula used by New York City's Riverside Church: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, one God, Mother of us all.” We should use the “writing end of the pencil, rather than the eraser,” says Fackre.

## TEARS FROM THE PAST, HOPE FOR THE FUTURE –

Thanks to public pressure from a UCC minister, a long stalled civil rights murder trial may be resolved. Robert L. Polk, an executive with the National Council of Churches, recently convened a public hearing in Hattiesburg, Miss., to try to bring to a conclusion a long-standing justice matter for the Dahmer family. The family has been trying for 29 years to bring to justice members of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan who allegedly killed Vernon Dahmer Sr. in 1966.

The town's district attorney bowed to family and public pressure to reopen the case four years ago but did nothing to move it along. Now, he is retiring, and Polk and the family are determined to squeeze out maximum publicity by holding the hearing and questioning the three D.A. candidates on what each would do if elected. The state has already set aside money to hire a special prosecutor. “This is a wound which has not been able to heal because of the infection of the past and it can't be healed until justice is served,” Polk said.

**SOUTH AFRICA BOUND?** – President Clinton has nominated UCC minister James A. Joseph as ambassador to South Africa. He is a member of Peoples Congregational UCC, Washington, D.C.